

REMARKS

A non-final Office Action mailed June 6, 2005 has been received and carefully reviewed. Claims 1-15 and 24-42 are pending and currently rejected in the instant application. Claims 1 and 24 have been amended. Claims 16-23 were previously cancelled. New claims 43-54 have been added. Reconsideration of the application is respectfully requested in view of the amendments to the claims and the following remarks.

The rejections are summarized as follows: Claims 1, 2, 8, 15 24-31, 37 and 42 stand rejected under §103(a) over Niazi (U.S. Patent No. 6,638,268) in view of Williams et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,408,214); claims 3, 4, 32 and 33 stand rejected under §103(a) over Niazi and Williams, as applied to claim 1 and 24 and in further view of Schaerf (U.S. Patent No. 5,409,469); claims 5, 6, 34 and 35 stand rejected under §103(a) over Niazi and Williams as applied to claims 1 and 24 and in further view of Bowe (U.S. Patent Publication 2001/0039413); claims 7, 9, 10, 36, 38 and 39 stand rejected under §103(a) over Niazi and Williams as applied to claims 1 and 24 and in further view of Lepulu et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,533,770); and claims 11-14, 40 and 41 stand rejected under §103(a) over Niazi and Williams as applied to claims 1 and 24.

Independent claims 1 and 24 have been amended to recite additional features which, in combination with other features of these claims, are neither taught nor suggested by the asserted references. In particular, claims 1 and 24 have been amended to recite a steering mechanism that is pivotably disposed on the guide handle. Claims 1 and 24 have been further amended to recite development of a pulling force on a steering tendon in response to pivoting of the steering mechanism to adjustably change a shape of a pre-shaped distal end of the outer sheath. Support for the amendments to claims 1 and 24 is found in Applicant's specification on page 12, line 24 through page 13, line 3, and in Figures 3A and 5, for example.

The asserted references fail to teach or suggest a guide handle that includes a pivotably disposed steering mechanism. The asserted art references disclose rotatable torque screws or no steering tendon/mechanism whatsoever. Applicant's pivotably

disposed steering mechanism, for example, advantageously facilitates single-hand manipulation of the steering mechanism, whereas the rotatable torque screw mechanisms of the asserted references require two-hand manipulation (one hand to rotate the torque screw and the other hand placed on the outer sheath).

New claims 43-54 recite additional features that are neither taught nor suggested by the asserted references. Support for these additional dependent claims may be found in Applicant's specification at page 10, lines 23-26, page 12, line 24 through page 13, line 3, and in Figures 3A and 5, for example.

By amending claims 1 and 24 (and adding new claims 43-54) Applicant has elected to further prosecute claims directed to clearly allowable subject matter to expedite allowance of the instant application. It is to be understood that Applicant's election does not constitute acquiescence to the Examiner's rejection of the claims on substantive art grounds. In particular, Applicant does not acquiesce to the Examiner's characterization of the asserted art or Applicant's claimed subject matter, nor of the Examiner's application of the asserted art to Applicant's claimed subject matter. Applicant reserves the right to address the Examiner's characterizations and rejections when prosecuting the rejected claims in one or more continuing applications.

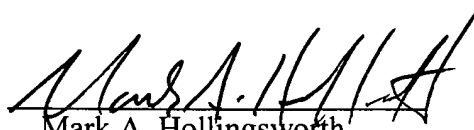
It is believed that pending claims 1-15 and 24-42, as amended, and new claims 43-54 are in condition for allowance and notification to that effect is respectfully requested. The Examiner is invited to contact Applicant's Representatives, at the below-listed telephone number, if there are any questions regarding the above new claims or if prosecution of this application may be assisted thereby.

Respectfully submitted,

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By:


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